

SO COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S HISTORY

Before the battle of Sedgemoor, Monmouth's army was encamped at Bridgewater, while the King's army lay on the plain some three miles away. Monmouth's attempts to reconnoitre the position of the opposing forces furnished an opportunity of which Macaulay skilfully avails himself.

The steeple of the parish church of Bridgewater is said to be the loftiest in Somersetshire, and commands a wide view over the surrounding country. Monmouth, accompanied by some of his officers, went up to the top of the square tower from which the spire ascends, and observed through a telescope the position of the enemy. Beneath him lay a flat expanse, now rich with cornfields and apple trees, but then, as its name imports, for the most part a dreary morass.¹

He goes on to describe in detail the natural features of the ground between the two armies, and then indicates the relative positions of the different villages in which the King's forces were quartered, and the character of the regiments who occupied them. At the end of the description he glides naturally into the story of the night march and the battle.

Another celebrated passage is the description of Glencoe. Taine quotes it at length as an example of Macaulay's skill.² After describing the conditions of the Highlands in 1691 and the difficulty which William's government

experienced in its attempt to quiet the
rebellious clans,
Macaulay tells us that one of the smallest
chiefs, Mac Ian
of Glencoe, proved more intractable than
great chiefs
such as Lochiel and Glengarry. His country
was more
inaccessible.

Mac Ian dwelt in the mouth of a ravine
situated not far
from the southern shore of Lochleven, an
arm of the sea

¹II, 592 (y).

² Taine, v. 214.